

Pathway 4:

Formal applications

For the third consecutive year, valid applications increased to record numbers

In 2021/22, there was a record number of applications: 23,789. That number exceeds the number of applications received in 2020/21 by 6%, following on from the 30% increase recorded between 2019/20 and 2020/21. This demonstrates the significance citizens place on their right to access information, and that they are increasingly exercising this right.

The GIPA Act provides citizens with a right to access government information, unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure.

Agencies must assess each application for information that is received. For valid access applications, agencies must apply the public interest test and balance the factors for, and against, the disclosure of the information that is requested.

The main benefits of the formal access pathway:

- The right to seek access is legally enforceable.
- Agencies must process applications within statutory time frames.
- Agencies are not subject to the direction or control of any Minister in the exercise of the agency's functions when dealing with an access application.
- Agencies must apply the public interest balancing test and consult with third parties to whom the information relates.
- Applicants have a right to seek review of an agency's decision about the application through a number of review avenues: an internal review by the agency, an external review by the Information Commissioner and an external review by the NCAT.

The IPC continues to publish a [publicly available dashboard](#) on its website, enabling easy access and understanding of NSW agencies' operation of the formal pathway. This initiative provides insights for agencies and citizens alike and has been widely commended.